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ABSTRACT

As a background to the present research, preliminary discussion is focused on Piaget's formulation of moral development in the child and recent investigations based on that formulation. The objective of this research was to assess the interrelationships between level of moral judgment maturity and several other sectors of development. A moral judgment situation (appearing in the appendix) was presented to 60 children, ages 5 through 8, while measurements of cognitive ability, personality, socialization, and creativity were obtained. Results support the contentions of Piaget and Kohlberg that there are definitely both social and cognitive aspects of major importance in the development of moral judgment and reasoning. Data indicate that the stage of development tapped in this research was the transition phase between constraint and autonomy--that phase during which rules and commands are being internalized and generalized. Kohlberg's comment that cognitive maturity is necessary but not sufficient for moral judgment maturity, as well as his and Piaget's ideas concerning the relatively increasing importance of socialization for the later stages of development, appear to be borne out. (JLB)

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Level of Moral Reasoning

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Piaget has described the course of moral development in the child as a gradual progression from an absolute and rigid sense of justice, which he terms moral realism, to a flexible sense of equity, moral relativism. Moral realism is a tendency on the child's part to regard duty and the value attaching to it as self-subsistent and independent, as imposing itself regardless of the circumstances in which an individual finds himself. It designates on the plane of judgment of values what corresponds to nominal realism and even verbalism or conceptual realism on the plane of theoretical reasoning. Three distinguishable features of moral realism are: 1) the "good" is rigidly defined by obedience; 2) the letter rather than the spirit of the law must be observed; 3) evaluations of actions are made not in terms of the motives which prompted them but only in terms of exact conformity with established rules.

This rigid respect for rules is derived from a personal respect for the authorities who promulgate and teach the rules. Moral realism is supported by two cognitive defects in the

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child's thought: 1) egocentrism--the confusion of one's own perspective with that of others which leads to an inability to see moral value as relative to various persons and ends; and 2) realism--the confusion of subjective phenomena with objective things which leads the child to view moral rules as fixed eternal entities rather than as psychosocial expectations. Moral realism, then, is the moral ideology resulting from the conjunction of two series of causes--those peculiar to the spontaneous thought of the child (egocentrism and realism) and those belonging to adult constraint, the canalization of the child's elementary feelings by persons external to him.

Between the approximate ages of eight and twelve years, there develops a respect toward authority and toward rules that is mutual, reciprocal, and relativistic. This respect leads to an autonomous regard for rules as products of group agreement and instruments of cooperative purposes. There is an increase in the use of reciprocity, exchange and retaliation as a basis for choice and judgment and also an increase in notions of relativism of value and an egalitarian denial of moral superiority of the adult. This mutual respect is believed to be associated with the cognitive capacity to differentiate one's own value perspective from that of others and both trends, toward authority and toward values, are believed to arise largely by means of peer-group interaction.

It is cooperation which corrects the attitude of egocentricity and leads to autonomy, thus showing in the moral sphere as in the intellectual that it plays a liberating and constructive role. With logic, it is the first source of criticism, suppressing both the spontaneous conviction of egocentricity and the blind faith in adult authority. With morality, it is evident in the decline of unilateral respect and the primacy of personal judgment, suppressing both egocentricity and realism and thus achieving an interiorization of rules. Cooperation in the moral realm results in transformations, according to Piaget, exactly parallel to those in the intellectual domain; and it develops, first parallel with constraint and then in contrast to it.

There seem to exist in the child, then, two distinct moral attitudes--one that judges actions on the basis of objective responsibility, material consequences, conformity to established rules; the other judges actions on the basis of subjective responsibility and takes intentions into account. These two moralities are due to formative processes which, broadly speaking, follow one another. Without constituting definite stages, they do at least define two distinct processes, one of which generally precedes the other in the moral development of the child although they may partially synchronize.

A recent study conducted by Lee (1969) was designed specifically to find out whether general cognitive structures and structures involved in moral judgment do develop concommitantly.

Each individual's performance on a cognitive task was used to predict his level of moral judgment which was determined by his responses to nine different morally conflicting story situations. It was hypothesised that cognitive and moral development would progress sequentially and concommitantly from a beginning period of pre-operational thought where moral judgment is based mainly on an authority oriented approach, to the next stage of concrete operational thought where cooperation and reciprocity are used as a base for moral judgment, and finally to the formal operational stage of thought where moral judgment involves idealistic, ideological orientations. The hypotheses were confirmed and the investigator felt that the findings clearly supported Piaget's thesis of concommitant growth of the two modes of thought.

Kuranuki (1968) investigated the moral judgment of four to eight year olds by determining their attitudes toward punishment. He found that, given a choice between two types, the subjects selected "punishment by reciprocity" after "expiatory punishment" with the advancement of age.

A study by Zavitz (1969) was designed to determine developmental trends in concepts of justice, as defined by Piaget, and to note any differences in these trends with respect to such variables as chronological age, socioeconomic class, and peer-peer and child-teacher relationships. This study indicated that chronological age but not socioeconomic class is a potent factor in this concept development. However, the author felt

that the most important result was the difference revealed in the two parallel moralities--adult constraint and peer-group cooperation. The data indicated, in comparison to Piaget, an accelerated advance in the development of the concept of justice in peer-peer situations and, at the same time, a leveling off or regression in child-teacher situations. This implies, according to Zavitz, that children's concepts of justice may be more advanced when dealing with peers alone than when an authority figure is present.

Glassco et al (1970) also conducted a study which brought out the interaction of socialization factors with the development of moral judgment. Second grade children who consistently judged moral acts in terms of objective consequences rather than the subjective intentions of the agents shifted markedly to a subjective basis following training on paired stories in which the objective consequences were equalized. The authors show that the primary effect of training on the judgmental style six months later with several different series of moral stories was on the centering-decentering socialization process. The long term effects of training were more consistent with Piagetian stage-dependent conceptualizations than with a superfiscial verbal response set.

Lawrence Kohlberg, whose extensive research in the area of moral development, is based on Piaget's formulations, feels that a number of the dimensions studied by the latter are really matters of content rather than of cognitive form. However, he

does maintain that, using Piaget's material, he has found that there are "natural," culturally universal and regular age-developmental trends in moral judgment, and that these have a formal-structural base parallel to the structural base of cognitive development. Since the core of a cognitive-development position is the doctrine of cognitive stages, Kohlberg, building on the notions of Piaget among others, defines six stages of moral development which he feels meet the criteria of cognitive stages, in terms of the general characteristics stated by Piaget.

Kohlberg's six stages are as follows: 1) obedience and punishment orientation, 2) naively egoistic orientation, 3) good-child orientation, 4) authority and social-order maintaining orientation, 5) contractual legalistic orientation, and 6) conscience or principle orientation. The definition of each stage is based on the subsumption of moral judgment under one of twenty-five aspects such as punishment, rights of property, contract, etc., representing basic moral concepts believed to be present in any society. Each of these concepts is differently defined and used at each of the six stages. The definition of the concepts at each stage can logically be claimed to represent a differentiation and integration of the concept as it was used at the preceding stage. The author maintains that his extensive empirical study and logical analysis have shown that the more mature modes of thought increase with age and the less mature modes decrease with age, evidence of a developmental sequence in moral attitudes and concepts. These types of thought represent structures emerging

from the interaction of the child with his social environment rather than directly reflecting external structures given by a culture and, hence, suggest the existance of internally patterned or organized transformations of social concepts and attitudes, transformations which constitute a developmental process. IQ itself appears to be a better indicator of the early rate of development than of the terminal status of moral judgment, which is more determined by social experience. The author suggests that, ". . . cognitive maturity is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for moral judgment maturity." (1969, p. 391).

Method

The present research bears on some questions raised by the theorists and investigators mentioned above, among others. In order to assess the interrelationships between level of moral judgment maturity and several other sectors of development, a moral judgment situation was presented to sixty children, ages five through eight years, at the same time as measurements of cognitive ability, personality, socialization, and creativity were obtained. The technique used was the same as that of Piaget and Kohlberg: a moral dilemma story (Appendix A) was related to each child, following which he was asked how he thought the child in the story should resolve the dilemma and why he had chosen that particular alternative.

Each child's response was tape-recorded, transcribed, and then scored according to Kohlberg's six developmental stages,

each with its concommitant motivational aspect of morality. This score was then entered along with the other measurements obtained in the factor analysis program described previously.

Results

The variable of moral judgment loaded primarily on the following four factors: the highest loading was on a factor of socialization sophistication and skills, the second highest--a cognitive component defined mainly by Piagetian-type tasks, the third--a reflexive component, and the fourth--a social reasoning factor. The results of the factor analysis, then, support the contentions of Piaget and Kohlberg that there are definitely both social and cognitive aspects of major importance in the development of moral judgment and reasoning.

The mean level employed by the subjects was level two--naively egoistic orientation. However, this average is somewhate misleading. Actually, 8.3% of the children gave no scorable response, 35.0% responded at the level of stage one, 13.3% at stage two, 33.3% at stage three, and 10.0% at stage four. As would be expected from both Piaget's and Kohlberg's findings, no one in this age group responded at stages five or six.

A one-way analysis of variance was used on each of the demographic variables available with each of the dependent measures. Only one of these was significant with the variable of moral judgment--the number of months the child had been

enrolled in the particular school which was involved in the study. Although chronological age, which has been shown to be a potent variable in some other studies, was not significant in the analysis of variance, it showed a statistically significant correlation of .44 with duration of attendance. This may be due to the fewer measurement intervals used in chronological age as oppossed to the greater number used in duration of attendance. T-tests were significant between the groups with one versus forty-five months of attendance and between the groups with one versus twenty-one months.

Discussion

The data indicate that the stage of development which has been tapped is the transition phase between constraint and autonomy, when they partially synchronize--that phase during which rules and commands are being internalized and generalized. The fact that 35% of the subjects responded at the level of stage one--an obedience and punishment orientation, and 33% responded at stage three--a good-child orientation, supports this idea of parallel operations.

Piaget feels that consciousness of self and eventually a reciprocal basis of moral judgment demands comparison with others, contact with the judgment and evaluation of others, mutual respect and cooperation. It can be assumed, perhaps, that the usual educational and peer-group experiences of our culture expose children to these requirements, but that the

advancement may be evident in behavior, especially with peers, prior to the child's ability to verbalize reasons for it. This is indicated by the fact that the highest loading for moral judgment was on the factor of socialization sophistication and skills, on which the decentering and socialization measures also loaded positively; and there was a much lower loading for moral judgment on the factor of social reasoning, on which the decentering and socialization measures loaded negatively. The suggestion of covert readiness prior to overt evidence is in accord with Glassco's results of a centering-decentering socialization effect following training on moral judgment stories and with Zavitz's finding that moral judgment was more advanced when children were dealing with peers alone than when an authority figure was present.

The results of the present study show the interrelationship of cognitive development and socialization with the development of moral reasoning in the child. More specifically, they support the theory of Piaget, with regard to this development, especially as it has been modified and extended by Kohlberg. The latter's comment that cognitive maturity is necessary but not sufficient for moral judgment maturity, as well as both his and Piaget's ideas concerning the relatively increasing importance of socialization for the later stages of development, appear to be borne out. This is not to say, however, that cognitive development and quality of social interactions exhaust the factors which bear a close interrelationship

with moral development. Perhaps there are more--a possibility for further research.

Perhaps, also, a next step might be to attempt to find what Anna Freud has referred to as the ideal "balance" between developmental sectors or lines of development. The evidence so far leads one to the paradoxical conclusion that morality itself is necessary but not sufficient--even the highest levels of moral reasoning do not alone guarantee truly desirable behavior. This seems to suggest that whether moral reasoning leads to distructive behavior or real ethicality depends upon the extent to which moral development is matched by development in the other sectors.

Appendix A

Joe's father promised he could go to camp if he earned the money for it; but then his father changed his mind and asked Joe to give him all the money he had earned. Joe lied and said he had only earned a little bit; and then he went to camp using all the rest of the money he had made. Before he went, he told his younger brother Alex about the money and about lying to their father. Now, do you think Alex should tell their father? Why?

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